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# EXCALIBUR

## The SINISTER MATRIX

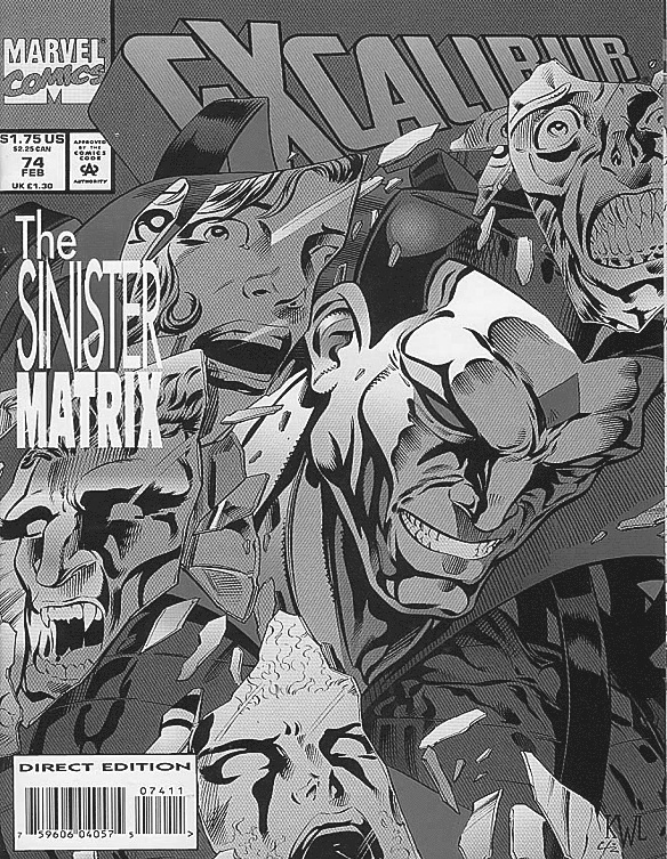
DIRECT EDITION



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A black and white comic book illustration of Rachel Summers. She is a woman with long, wavy hair, wearing a dark, form-fitting suit with a cape. She is seated at a large, complex computer console with multiple monitors and buttons. The room is filled with various pieces of technology and equipment, suggesting a high-tech environment. The background shows some structural elements of the room, including a door with a striped pattern.

THE PROTEUS ROOM, MUIR ISLAND, BURIED DEEP INSIDE THE HEART OF GRANITE THAT ANCHORS THIS SPECK OF ROCK IN THE RAGING TUMULT THAT IS THE NORTH SEA ...

... GIVEN AS A GIFT FROM MOIRA MacTAGGERT TO HER NEW GUESTS, EXCALIBUR ...

... HOUSING SOPHISTICATED VIRTUAL-REALITY MACHINERY CAPABLE OF CREATING FOR THE VIEWER A WORLD INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE REAL ONE.

RACHEL SUMMERS -- CODE-NAMED PHOENIX-- STUDIES THE DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDS FROM HER LAST PROTEUS ROOM SESSION ...

... SEARCHING FOR ANY SIGNS OF ABERRANT MANIFESTATIONS OF HER MUTANT POWERS WHICH SHE CARRIES AS PART OF HER GENETIC HERITAGE ...

... HOPING FOR SOME EXPLANATION FOR HER RECENT MOMENTARY LAPSES OF MEMORY, WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY THE EVENTS TRULY AT THE CENTER OF HER QUEST.

BODY PARTS OF HER TIME-LOST TEAM-MATE, CAPTAIN BRITAIN, KEEP SWITCHING WITH HER OWN. IS IT MERELY SOME HIGH JINK IN A TIMELINE WHICH HAVE CAUGHT RACHEL, OR IS IT SOMETHING MORE -- SOMETHING SHE IS FAR TOO AFRAID TO FACE--THE REALIZATION THAT SHE HOLDS ALL THE ANSWERS WITHIN HER, IF SHE WOULD BE WILLING TO LOOK.

BUT AS SHE BEGINS HER EXPLORATION, SHE CANNOT DENY THAT SOMETHING'S WRONG -- IT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN AGAIN ... THE RETURN OF ...



RACHEL!  
YOU'VE GOT  
TO HELP  
ME!

BRIAN STOP!  
I CAN'T CONTROL  
THE AMOUNT OF  
MY POWER  
THAT YOU'RE DRAW-  
ING OUT OF ME. IT'S  
TOO MUCH!

I'M BEING  
DRAWN INTO  
THE FUTURE  
AS YOU'RE  
COMING BACK  
TO THE  
PAST.



THE PAIN!

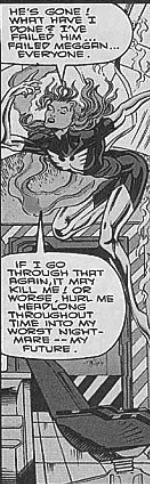
AAAAHHHHHHHHH  
AAAAHHHHHHHHH  
AAAAHHHHHHHHH



WE CAN'T  
BOTH EXIST  
IN THE  
SAME TIME-  
ZONE!

I'VE GOT  
TO STOP  
THIS... FIND  
SOME OTHER  
WAY TO FREE  
BRIAN!

I'VE GOT  
TO DRAW  
THE FORCE  
BACK  
-- BREAK  
THE CONNEC-  
TION!



HE'S GONE!  
WHAT HAVE I  
DONE? I'VE  
FAILED HIM...  
FAILED MEGGAN...  
EVERYONE.

IF I GO  
THROUGH THAT  
AGAIN, IT MAY  
KILL ME! OR  
WORSE, HURL ME  
HEADLONG  
THROUGHOUT  
TIME INTO MY  
WORST NIGHT-  
MARE -- MY  
FUTURE.



WHAT AM I  
GOING TO DO? HOW  
CAN I BE SO  
SELFISH? HOW CAN  
I KEEP CAPTAIN  
BRITAIN FROM THE  
ONE HE LOVES...



MEGGAN!

THE MOMENT KITTY PRIDE SAW THE STATE OF HER FRIEND ON THE COMMA. LINK, SHE RUSHED TO BRADDOCK MANSION AND BROUGHT MEGGAN BACK TO MUIR ISLAND...

...KNOWING THAT NEXT TO PROFESSOR X, THERE IS NO ONE ELSE ON EARTH, OTHER THAN DR. MOIRA MACTAGGERT, WHO WOULD EVEN HAVE A CHANCE OF SAVING THE METAMORPH.

KITTY HAS LOST TOO MANY FRIENDS RECENTLY TO TAKE LIGHTLY THE RISK OF LOSING ANOTHER.



IT'S ALL RIGHT, MEGGAN. YOU ARE AMONG FRIENDS HERE. OH, PLEASE, CALM DOWN. I KNOW THAT YOU MISS BRIAN BADLY.



I STILL REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME MEGGAN TOLD ME HOW SHE MET BRIAN. IT WAS IN A DESERTED WAREHOUSE. THEY FOUGHT TOOTH AND NAIL-- SHE WAS IN A SIMILAR STATE TO THIS. ONLY MUCH MORE IN CONTROL OF HERSELF.

AS FAR AS MEGGAN'S MEDICAL HISTORY GOES, I DONNAE HAVE MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE.



MEGGAN TOLD ME THAT SHE FELT OVERWHELMED BY HER POWERS. SHE DIDN'T KNOW HER STRENGTH, HER LIMITATIONS HOW TO CONTROL HER NEW-FOUND ABILITIES.

EVENTUALLY HER LOVE FOR BRIAN GAVE HER PERSONALITY A SINGULAR FOCUS. OVER THE YEARS SHE SEEMED TO FIND HER IDENTITY. IN HER LOVE FOR HIM SHE BECAME BEAUTIFUL.

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW.

THE QUESTION IS... IS THIS A DEFENSIVE MOVE?... IF SO... WHAT IS SHE DEFENDING HERSELF FROM?

OR IS IT A CATHARTIC STATE... THAT SHE HAS NO CONTROL OVER?

ALSO, WHAT ANTAGONIZES AN OTHERWISE PLACID CREATURE?



SHE IS NOT A CREATURE-- SHE IS MY FRIEND!

YOU, MOIRA, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH OF A FAMILY WE ALL ARE!

WHY ARE YOU SO CALM?



KITTY, YOU MUST GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF!

RORY AND I ARE DOING ALL WE CAN!

WE CAN'T JUST SNAP OUR FINGERS AND GET ALL THE ANSWERS, HEAL ALL THE WOUNDS!

WE ARE SCIENTISTS-- WE HAVE TO OBSERVE, ANALYZE AND THEN THEORIZE

WE ARE DOING OUR **JOB**, AND PART OF IT IS TO DIS-CUSS POSSIBILITIES.

I KNOW YOU'RE DOING YOUR BEST. I'M SORRY, IT'S JUST THAT... I'M SO WORRIED. I FEEL HELPLESS! I'D RATHER GO UP AGAINST MAGNETO THAN SIT HERE WATCHING **THIS**.



I KNOW THE FEELING, LASSY.

I'VE HAD TO WATCH SO MANY DEAR ONES SLIP AWAY. I WOULD NAE WISH IT ON ANY-ONE!

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO FEEL FOR A PULSE!

BUT I DO THINK IT'S BETTER TO CONTAIN HER. NO WAY OF KNOWING IF SHE WILL BECOME EXCITABLE AGAIN.



THESE CLAMPS ARE TOTALLY RE-INFORCED. SHE SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO BREAK OUT AGAIN.

TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, I THINK I'D BETTER SEPARATE HER, AS WELL.

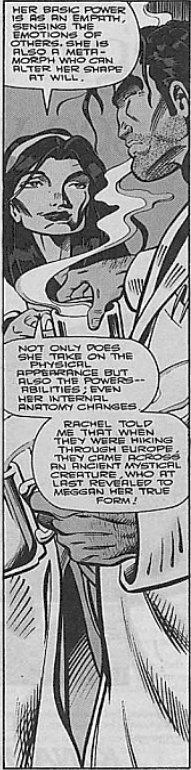


MY BRAIN'S  
RUNNING DRY.  
IT NEEDS A SHOT  
OF CAFFEINE.  
HOW DO YOU TAKE  
YOUR POISON?

BLACK,  
TO GO  
WITH MY  
MOOD.

DO WE  
EVEN KNOW  
HOW HER  
MORPHING  
POWERS  
WORK?

SHE HAS  
MUTAGENIC  
ABILITIES THAT IN  
SOME FORM HAVE  
BEEN WITH HER  
SINCE BIRTH, WHICH  
IS UNUSUAL. MOST  
MUTANT ABILITIES  
MANIFEST THEM-  
SELVES AT  
PUBERTY.



HER BASIC POWER  
IS AS AN EMPATH,  
SENSING THE  
EMOTIONS OF  
OTHERS. SHE IS  
ALSO A META-  
MORPH WHO CAN  
ALTER HER SHAPE  
AT WILL.

NOT ONLY DOES  
SHE TAKE ON THE  
PHYSICAL  
APPEARANCE BUT  
ALSO THE POWERS--  
ABILITIES; EVEN  
HER INTERNAL  
ANATOMY CHANGES

RACHEL TOLD  
ME THAT WHEN  
THEY WERE HIKING  
THROUGH EUROPE,  
THEY CAME ACROSS  
AN ANCIENT MYSTICAL  
CREATURE WHO AT  
LAST REVEALED TO  
MEGGAN HER TRUE  
FORM!



RACHEL SAID IT WAS ONE  
OF THE MOST AMAZING  
THINGS SHE HAS EVER  
SEEN!

SHE SAID THAT MEGGAN  
WAS BEAUTIFUL IN A  
WAY THAT DENIES DEFINI-  
TION, THAT BEGETS AND  
CONFOUNDS WORDS, A  
BEAUTY OF FORM AND  
SPIRIT.







IT'S LIKE  
TREATING  
SOMEONE IN A  
COMA. YOU  
KNOW THEIR  
MIND IS  
LOCKED AWAY  
DEEP INSIDE.  
YOU JUST HAVE  
TO FIGURE OUT  
HOW TO REACH  
THEM.



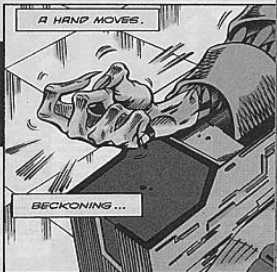
IF BRIAN  
HAD SUCH A  
POSITIVE  
EFFECT ON  
HER BEFORE--  
THEN MAYBE  
IF WE RIGGED  
UP SOME  
VIDEOS OF HIM  
IN ACTION--  
AS CAPTAIN  
BRITAIN ...



...WE MIGHT  
GET SOME  
REACTION.



AN EYE  
FLICKERS.



A HAND MOVES.

AND THEN TO RACHEL...  
A LOOK, DEEP... FULL OF  
PAIN ...

...TO THE ONE  
PERSON IN THE WHOLE  
WORLD WHO CAN  
HELP.



SAVE ONE!

INTERESTING!



...PLEADING ...



A LOOK  
THAT NO  
ONE ELSE  
NOTICES.

'YOU ARE ENTERING  
RETENTION-BLOCK  
17-D-- HIGH CONTAIN-  
MENT SECTION.'

AUTHORIZATION  
VERIFIED--ACCESS  
ACKNOWLEDGED.

CAUTIONS MUST BE  
TAKEN TO MAKE SURE THAT  
NO AIR ESCAPES FROM THIS  
CONFINEMENT CENTER, LEST  
IT POLLUTE THE ENTIRE BASE.

NIGHTCRAWLER  
HESITATES AT  
THE FIRST SIGN  
OF SPOOR, NOT  
BECAUSE HE IS  
AFRAID--

--BUT BECAUSE A  
WEEK AGO HE TRIED TO  
KILL HIM, EGGED ON BY  
SPOOR'S MUTANT POWER  
--TO RELEASE  
CHEMICALS SO POWERFUL  
AS TO ALTER A PERSON'S  
BEHAVIOR AND MOOD--

SLUMMING  
IT, NIGHT-  
CRAWLER?

--IRRITATION TURNED  
TO ANGER. A FIGHT TO  
SUBDUE BECAME A  
FIGHT TO KILL.

I CAME  
TO SEE  
IF THERE  
WAS ANY-  
THING I  
COULD  
GET YOU.

I WANT  
OUT OF THIS  
HOLE.

TO LOVE YOUR  
ENEMY. TO TURN  
THE OTHER CHEEK.  
IN THE FACE OF ALL  
THE VIOLENCE IN THE  
WORLD, THOSE SIMPLE  
TENETS WHICH HAVE  
GUIDED HIM SINCE HE  
WAS A CHILD SEEM  
NAIVE AND SIMPLISTIC.

HOW ABOUT SOME-  
THING TO READ? MOIRA  
HAS A BOOK-- IT TALKS OF  
A UTOPIA WHERE MEN AND  
MUTANTS LIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE.

GARBAGE! IT'S  
ONE OR THE  
OTHER-- TO THE  
DEATH! GO BACK  
TO YOUR FRIENDS.  
IF YOU HAVE ANY...

WHY WILL  
YOU NOT LET  
US HELP  
YOU?

THERE IS A  
DEATH  
PENALTY  
IN VIR-  
GINIA.

YOU'RE ASKING  
ME TO HURRY UP  
AND HELP SEND  
YOU TO YOUR  
DEATH.

I CAN'T DO  
THAT.

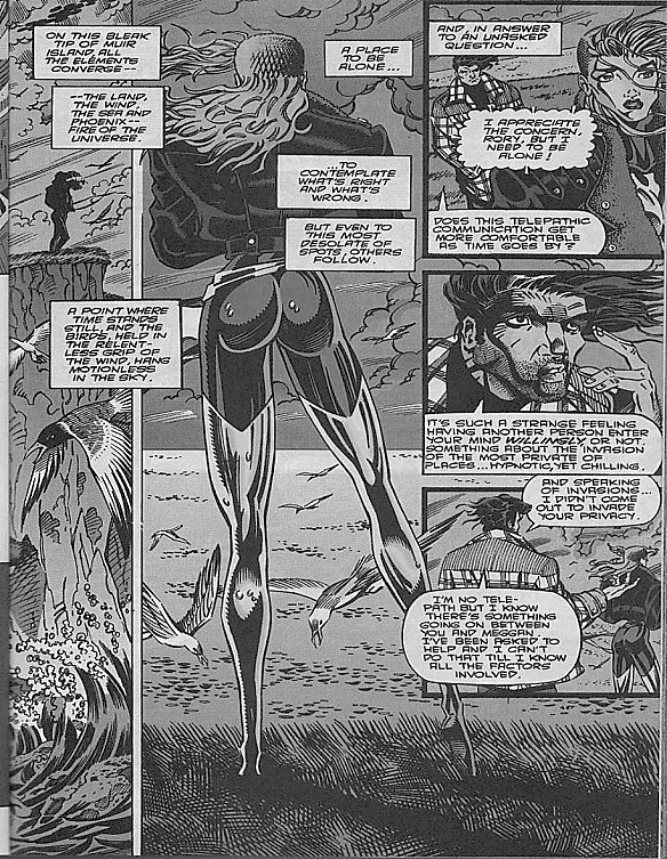
ALL LIFE IS  
SACRED.

EVEN  
MINE?

AS MUCH  
AS YOU WANT  
ME TO HATE  
YOU, I WON'T...  
I WON'T.

AND AS THESE WORDS  
LEAVE HIS THROAT, KURT  
REALIZES HE HAS LOST  
THIS BATTLE OF  
TEMPERAMENT, AT LEAST.

HELP ME? YOU WANT  
TO HELP ME? THEN  
LET ME BE DEPORTED.  
I'LL PAY FOR MY  
CRIMES. I'LL EVEN  
PLEAD GUILTY... TAKE  
THE PUNISHMENT DUE  
FOR MY LITTLE  
MASSACRE.



ON THIS BLEAK  
TIP OF MUIR  
LAND, ALL  
THE ELEMENTS  
CONVERGE--

--THE LAND,  
THE WIND,  
THE SEA AND  
PHOENIX--  
FIRE OF THE  
UNIVERSE.

A PLACE  
TO BE  
ALONE ...

...TO  
CONTEMPLATE  
WHAT'S RIGHT  
AND WHAT'S  
WRONG.

BUT EVEN TO  
THIS MOST  
DESOLATE OF  
SPOTS, OTHERS  
FOLLOW.

A POINT WHERE  
TIME STANDS  
STILL, AND THE  
BIRDS, HELD IN  
THE RELENT-  
LESS GRIP OF  
THE WIND, HANG  
MOTIONLESS  
IN THE SKY.

AND, IN ANSWER  
TO AN UNASKED  
QUESTION ...

I APPRECIATE  
THE CONCERN,  
RORY, BUT I  
NEED TO BE  
ALONE!

DOES THIS TELEPATHIC  
COMMUNICATION GET  
MORE COMFORTABLE  
AS TIME GOES BY?

IT'S SUCH A STRANGE FEELING  
HAVING ANOTHER PERSON ENTER  
YOUR MIND *WILLINGLY* OR NOT.  
SOMETHING ABOUT THE INVASION  
OF THE MOST PRIVATE OF  
PLACES... HYPNOTIC, YET CHILLING.

AND SPEAKING  
OF INVASIONS...  
I DIDN'T COME  
OUT TO INVADE  
YOUR PRIVACY.

I'M NO TELE-  
PATH BUT I KNOW  
THERE'S SOMETHING  
GOING ON BETWEEN  
YOU AND MEGGAN.  
I'VE BEEN ASKED TO  
HELP AND I CAN'T  
DO THAT TILL I KNOW  
ALL THE FACTORS  
INVOLVED.



COME  
CLOSER  
TO THE EDGE,  
DR. CAMPBELL.  
BELIEVE ME,  
I WON'T LET  
YOU FALL.

TOGETHER  
THEY WALK  
TWO PEOPLE,  
PERHAPS A  
LITTLE MORE  
TRUSTING  
THAN WHEN  
THE DAY  
STARTED.

MY LIFE IS  
PRECIOUS  
TO ME,  
RORY.

A FEW  
MONTHS AGO,  
I BATTLED A  
COSMIC ENTITY  
CALLED  
NECROM--

--WE BOTH  
DIED IN THE  
CONFLICT, BUT  
BECAUSE MY BODY  
IS A TEMPLATE FOR  
THE PHOENIX, IT WAS  
ABLE TO RECREATE  
ME, GIVE ME A  
SECOND CHANCE.

THAT KINDA  
STUFF CHANGES  
A WOMAN'S HEAD,  
Y'KNOW.

MEGGAN  
THINKS I'M THE  
KEY TO  
BRIAN'S RETURN,  
RORY--

THINGS HAVE  
BEEN HAPPENING--  
I HEAR BRIAN CALLING TO  
ME-- BUT SOMEHOW-- SOME  
WAY--

--I KNOW IF I  
ANSWER, EVERYTHING  
I'VE GAINED HERE  
WILL BE LOST.

MEGGAN IS MY FRIEND,  
DOCTOR. BUT WHAT SHE WANTS OF  
ME... I DON'T THINK I CAN DO.

YOU SOUND NERVOUS.  
FUNNY, YOU'RE NOT THE  
TYPE WHO STRIKES ME  
AS EASILY FRIGHTENED.

I'M NOT  
BELIEVE ME  
BUCKO-- I'VE  
SURVIVED A  
LOT IN MY  
LIFE.

BUT THAT'S JUST THE POINT, I'VE SURVIVED--AND  
THAT'S MADE ME A BIT-- I DON'T KNOW -- SELFISH?

--AND I  
THINK  
SHE'S  
RIGHT.

WHY?



I FEEL A  
CHAPTER IN  
MY LIFE IS  
COMING TO  
A CLOSE--  
JUST WHEN  
SO MUCH  
WAS  
BEGINNING.

THIS MIGHT BE A BIT FORWARD OF ME, RACHEL,  
CONSIDERING WE JUST MET, BUT WHATEVER HAPPENS--  
YOU WON'T FACE IT ALONE.



THE LOCATION: ONE OF THE MONITORING STATIONS OF THE GAMESMASTER -- A MUTANT TELEPATH INCAPABLE OF BLOCKING OUT THE THOUGHTS OF THE WORLD.

BILLIONS OF FRAGILE DREAMERS, ALL THEIR DESIRES, WORRIES AND WHINES CASCADE THROUGH HIS BRAIN. FOR A MUTANT WHO WOULD NOT SUFFER FOOLS GLADLY, HE DISPLAYS A SURPRISINGLY BENIGN COUNTENANCE ...

FAILING ME DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR YOUR LONG-TERM FUTURE.

YOUR CONCERNS ARE NOTHING TO ME --

... COMPARED AT LEAST  
TO THE DEATH-WARMED-  
OVER FEATURES OF  
MISTER SINISTER. HE HAS  
PAID A SURPRISE VISIT TO  
EXPRESS HIS DISAPPROVAL  
... IN PERSON.

THE GAMESMASTER  
IS REMINDED OF A  
STRAY THOUGHT THAT  
ONCE PASSED THROUGH  
HIS MIND: "AN ALLY  
HAS TO BE WATCHED  
CLOSER THAN AN ENEMY."

MR. SINISTER,  
YOU MUST  
UNDERSTAND

I SET UP  
THE GAME. MY  
PLAYERS ARE  
ON THEIR OWN  
AFTER THE RULES  
HAVE BEEN STATED.  
MEET SIENA  
BLAZE.

YEAH, WELL,  
YOU CAN TAKE  
YOUR 'BOPE'  
AND STUFF IT.  
YOU BOTH MAKE  
ME SICK.

I WAS  
ON THE  
SHARP END  
OF LOSING--  
IT AIN'T SO  
INCIDENTAL.

YOU WERE CHARGED  
WITH RETRIEVING THE  
DNA INFORMATION OF  
MOIRA'S MUTANT SON.  
IT COULD HAVE BEEN OF  
GREAT USE. YOU FAILED,  
AND NOW YOU'LL PAY  
THE PRICE.

I TRIED. I  
ALMOST ~~HAD~~  
~~IT~~ ~~MOBOD~~  
TOLD ME PHOENIX  
WOULD BE THERE.  
SHE HIT ME WHEN  
I WASN'T LOOK-  
ING.

SHE THOUGHT  
I WAS OUT  
COLD, BUT I  
OUTFOXED HER.  
I SCRATCHED  
THE WITCH'S  
FACE.

WHAT? YOU  
SCRATCHED  
RACHEL  
SUMMERS?

YEAH, SHE  
GOT UNDER  
MY SKIN, SO  
I GOT UNDER  
HERS.

EXCELLENT.



GIVE ME  
YOUR  
HAND.

OOOWWW!!  
WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING?!

HEY!  
WATCH THE  
MANICURE,  
YOU BIG  
BRUTE.

YOU KNOW,  
YOU'RE A  
REAL SICKO.  
WHAT'S YOUR  
GAME?

MY GAME?  
I DON'T PLAY  
GAMES--I  
PLAN. I SCHEME...  
I OVERCOME.

FASCINATING!

THESE DNA SAMPLES  
ARE OF AN ALTERNATIVE  
TIME LINE, A DIFFERENT  
GENETIC PATH--ONE THAT,  
AT SOME POINT, DIVERTED  
FROM THE SUMMERS'  
TIME-LINE ON THIS EARTH!

AMAZING. MY  
COMPUTER MODELS  
MAY BE ABLE TO  
TELL ME EXACTLY  
WHEN AND WHERE  
THE DIVERGENCE  
OCCURRED.

YOU ARE FREE  
TO GO, MS. BLAZE.  
BE GLAD I  
MADE SOME *USE*  
OF YOU. YOU  
WOULDN'T LIKE  
THE ALTERNATIVE.

LATE EVENING.

THE SUN SET LONG AGO, AND THE INHABITANTS OF MUIR ARE SETTLING IN FOR THE NIGHT.

DID I DO THE RIGHT THING...

...CONFIDING IN RORY LIKE THAT?

I MEAN, I HARDLY KNOW THE MAN! FUNNY IN A WAY, THAT LACK OF HISTORY ACTUALLY HELPED.

HE WAS SO FORMAL--JUST THE FACTS MA'AM -- THE NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT!

OKAY, RAY-- ENOUGH WITH THE BAD JOKES...

...IT DOESN'T QUITE MASK THE FEAR, DOES IT?

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE BABBLERD ON ABOUT BRIAN-- ONCE I STARTED, I COULDN'T STOP MYSELF. LORD KNOWS, I DON'T TRUST A LOT OF PEOPLE--

-- BUT JUST ONE LOOK INTO HIS SOULFUL, BROWN EYES-- AND I WOULD'VE TOLD HIM ANYTHING.

--AND I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S A GOOD THING.

THIS IS MY HOME-- MY FRIENDS ARE HERE! MY PLACE IS WITH THEM.

YET THESE TIME RIPPLES WITH BRIAN HAVE SHOWN ME A PATH... A POSSIBLE FUTURE... ONE THAT I DON'T WANT TO TREAD.

I'VE GONE THROUGH TOO MUCH TO LOSE THEM NOW.



I MEAN, JEAN AND SCOTT WILL BE GETTING MARRIED! MY PARENTS ARE COMING TOGETHER, JUST LIKE THEY DID IN MY TIME. THAT MEANS I COULD BE BORN SOON-- I COULD BE REAL!

SO WHY WHEN EVERYTHING IS FINALLY COMING TOGETHER, DO I FEEL SO MISERABLE?





WHAT WOULD RORY MAKE  
OF A FUTURE THAT HOLDS  
MURDEROUS BEASTS LIKE  
AHAB -- MASTER OF THE  
HOUNDS AND MASTER OF ME?



AHAB BRAINWASHED  
ME INTO SERVITUDE.

SCARRED ME FOR LIFE  
WITH THE MARKS OF A HOUND.

TAUGHT ME  
TO KILL THOSE  
I LOVED...

HE BRUTALIZED  
ME -- BODY AND  
SOUL --



--FORCED ME  
TO WITNESS  
THE SENTINELS  
KILL MY FAMILY.

ONE THING HE  
TAUGHT ME  
WELL THOUGH.  
HATE.



FIRST I HATED HIM...  
THEN I HATED THE  
WORLD... FINALLY I  
ENDED UP HATING  
MYSELF!



I'VE BEEN  
THINKING ABOUT  
WHAT SHE TOLD  
ME... I COULDN'T  
GET TO SLEEP.

MAYBE IT'S  
NOT TOO LATE  
FOR SUPPER...  
WITH A FRIEND...  
FOR A CHANGE.



SCOTT AND JEAN, IT IS NOT SURPRISING, BUT IT IS UNEXPECTED.

THOSE TWO WERE A COUPLE FROM THE DAY I MET THEM. NO MATTER WHAT PAIN AND ANGUISH THE WORLD THREW AT THEM, THEY CAME THROUGH TOGETHER.

THIS MARRIAGE IS A TESTIMONY TO THAT.

WILL I EVER HAVE A NORMAL LIFE--

--WIFE, DIE KINDE?

HOW CAN I THINK OF A NORMAL LIFE? I DO NOT KNOW MY PARENTS--THEY WERE BOTH KILLED SOON AFTER I WAS BORN. THEN I WAS BROUGHT UP IN A CIRCUS!



MY OLD GIRLFRIEND AMANDA SEFTON, TURNED OUT TO BE THE DAUGHTER OF MY ADOPTED MOTHER, WHOSE SON I KILLED IN SELF-DEFENSE.

NORMAL? I DON'T THINK SO.



BUT WHAT IS NORMAL?

MAYBE WHEN WE ARE IN NEW YORK FOR THE WEDDING, I SHOULD TRY TO FIND MYSTIQUE--

--SHE WAS ALWAYS PLAYING WITH MY MIND, TAUNTING ME ABOUT MY REAL MOTHER. MAYBE SHE REALLY DOES KNOW SOMETHING.



IT IS GETTING TOO CROWDED IN HERE, WITH ALL MY THOUGHTS, I NEED SOME FRESH AIR.

NIGHTCRAWLER FINDS THAT HE CANNOT ESCAPE THIS EVENING'S MELANCHOLY MUSINGS SO EASILY.

CERISE ...

JUST THE SIGHT OF THE STARS REMINDS ME OF YOU. WILL I EVER SEE YOU AGAIN?

OR ARE YOU JUST ANOTHER UNFINISHED CHAPTER OF MY LIFE--IN A BOOK THAT SEEMS PAINFULLY FULL OF SUCH ENTRIES?



WONDER WHAT YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT NOW, ILLYANA? *YOU* WOULD HAVE MADE YOU HAPPY, SEEING JEAN AND SCOTT FINALLY TYING THE KNOT.

YOU ALWAYS LOVED A GOOD PARTY, DIDN'T YA, BLONDIE?

IT'S AMAZING, JUST WHEN WE WERE ALL SO SAD, SOMETHING LIKE *THIS* HAPPENS. IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO, SOMETHING TO REMIND US THAT LIFE GOES ON, MOST TIMES, AT LEAST.



DO YOU MISS ILLYANA AS MUCH AS I DO, LOCKHEED?

I BET YOU DO, LITTLE FELLA. SHE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL.

SIGH



LOOK AT THIS MESS. I HATE LIVING OUT OF BOXES, BUT UNPACKING SEEMED REALLY UNIMPORTANT AFTER ILLYANA DIED. A LOT OF THINGS DIDN'T SEEM IMPORTANT.

OKAY! ENOUGH! SHE'D HAVE HATED THIS SEEING ME MOPIN' AROUND.

IF THERE WAS ONE THING SHE WAS -- IT WAS A FIGHTER, AND IT'S TIME TO GET ON WITH THINGS.



WHERE'D I THROW THAT TRAVEL BAG?



I HAVEN'T OPENED IT SINCE I GOT BACK FROM THE FUNERAL. IF I LEAVE IT ANY LONGER, MY CLOTHES WILL START WALKING THEMSELVES TO THE LAUNDRY.

GUESS THAT'S AS GOOD A PLACE TO START UNPACKING AS ANY.



OH, LORD. IT'S THE  
BRAMF DOLL. I THOUGHT  
I'D LEFT THAT BEHIND  
WITH JUBILEE. SHE WAS  
SO UPSET, BUT TOO TOUGH  
TO ASK FOR HELP.

I'M SURE  
THE X-MEN  
SEE THROUGH  
THAT... AT  
LEAST, I  
HOPE SO.

KITTY READS IN SILENCE.  
EMOTIONS THAT SHE  
THOUGHT CONQUERED  
RALLY AGAIN FOR ANOTHER  
ASSAULT.



Thanks,  
it got me thru  
the night -  
I thought you  
should have it,  
besides, it'd ruin  
my image!  
- Jubilee



SORRY.  
LOCKHEED.  
I'VE BEEN  
SO SELF-  
ISH!

ALL I'VE BEEN  
THINKING ABOUT  
IS MYSELF. I  
DON'T KNOW  
WHAT I'D DO  
WITHOUT  
YOU.

RACHEL,  
NIGHTCRAWLER,  
YOU. YOU'RE MY  
FAMILY. WE HAVE  
TO BE THERE  
FOR EACH OTHER.



WHAT ABOUT  
PETER, THOUGH;  
WHO IS THERE  
FOR HIM?

HE'S LOST SO  
MUCH... HE MUST  
BE SO LONELY.  
FOR A MAN  
WHO'S AS HARD  
AS STEEL--  
HIS HEART'S  
AS SOFT AS  
THEY COME.



AFTER A RESTLESS NIGHT, A WILD CRY BREAKS THE PAWN.



OCH NA,  
THE WEE  
THING IS  
GOING  
CRAZY!

OH MY GOD!  
SHE'S TRANS-  
FORMED AGAIN--  
I'VE NAER SEEN  
HER WITH SUCH  
STRENGTH AND  
FEROCITY.

I ONLY HOPE  
THIS STUN GUN  
HAS SOME EFFECT!



MOIRA WILL NOT BE CONSCIOUS  
TO SEE HOW INEFFECTUAL THE  
DRUG WAS ON MEGGAN. JUST AS  
WELL, AS HANDS THAT CAN SNAP  
REINFORCED STEEL BANDS WILL  
NOT BE STOPPED BY SOFT FLESH  
AND BONES.

DR. MacTABBERT IS  
OF NO CONCERN TO  
THIS MEGGAN. JUST  
A FLY TO BE BRUSHED  
ASIDE...

...AS SHE  
SENSES HER  
REAL TORMENTOR  
APPROACHING!



...CAPTAIN  
BRITAIN!

HE HAS BEEN LOST  
TO THEM FOR SOME  
TIME, TRAPPED IN AN  
ERRANT TEMPORAL  
LOOP.

DESPERATELY  
TRYING TO CONTACT  
EXCALIBUR THROUGH  
RACHEL ...

...WITH  
LITTLE  
LUCK.

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ALL HIS  
ATTEMPTS  
HAVE BEEN  
BLOCKED!

TAPPING THE  
TEMPORAL POWER  
THAT IS RACHEL'S  
BIRTHRIGHT, THIS TIME  
HE MIGHT BE  
SUCCESSFUL--

-- BUT AT A  
PRICE THAT IS  
TOO GREAT FOR  
RACHEL TO PAY.

**BRIAN!**

# IN THE NAME OF LOVE

WRITTEN WITH LOVE BY -- RICHARD ASHFORD  
DRAWN WITH PASSION BY -- IAN CHURCHILL  
INKED WITH ADORATION BY -- MARRY CANCELARIO,  
JOAN SMITH AND KIMMY ELLIOTT  
LETTERED WITH AFFECTION BY -- PAT BROSSERU  
COLORED WITH DEVOTION BY -- GARRAHY AND MATTHYS  
EDITED WITH COMMISSION BY -- SUZANNE SARGENT  
GROUPLY EDITED WITH APPRECIATION BY -- BOB HARRAS  
CHIEFLY EDITED WITH CONCERN BY -- TOM DEFALCO



RORY, IS  
MOIRA ALL  
RIGHT? DID  
MEGGAN--!!

SHE'S  
FINE, KURT,  
AS FAR AS I  
CAN TELL...

...SLIGHTLY  
CONCUSSED,  
BUT SHE'S  
BREATHING.

I'LL GET YOU BOTH  
OUT OF HERE. RACHEL  
WILL TAKE CARE OF MEGGAN--  
SHE WAS RIGHT BEHIND ME.

NO! SHE  
MUSTN'T COME  
IN HERE-- IT'S  
TOO DANGEROUS--

HERR  
DOCTOR,  
I'M AFRAID  
WE'RE TOO  
LATE FOR  
THAT.

**RACHEL!**

AND SUDDENLY A VOICE  
LOST IN A FEROCIOUS  
FORM CRIES OUT IN PAIN  
AND AGONY...

HELP ME!  
HELP ME RACHEL!  
FREE BRIAN!





RORI--  
STAY  
CLOSE  
OR I WON'T  
BE ABLE TO  
TELEPORT  
YOU TO  
SAFETY.

WAGNER!  
ARE YOU  
BLIND?  
RACHEL  
NEEDS  
HELP!

I KNOW THAT...  
BUT SHE CAN TAKE  
CARE OF HERSELF!



IF I CAN JUST GET A CLEAR  
SHOT AT MEGAN'S NECK...  
STRAIGHT TO THE JUGULAR...  
SHE'LL BE OUT IN SECONDS.



NO! RORI,  
WHY DID YOU  
INTERFERE? SHE  
WAS HOLDING BACK.  
MEGAN WOULD  
NEVER  
HURT ME!



YOU  
JUMPED  
IN, RORI--  
AND YOU  
HAD NO  
RIGHT.



NO RIGHT  
AT ALL!

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STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER  
MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION  
(PROVIDED BY 39 U.S.C. 3605)

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PHENOM  
FOR THE  
LAST  
TIME!